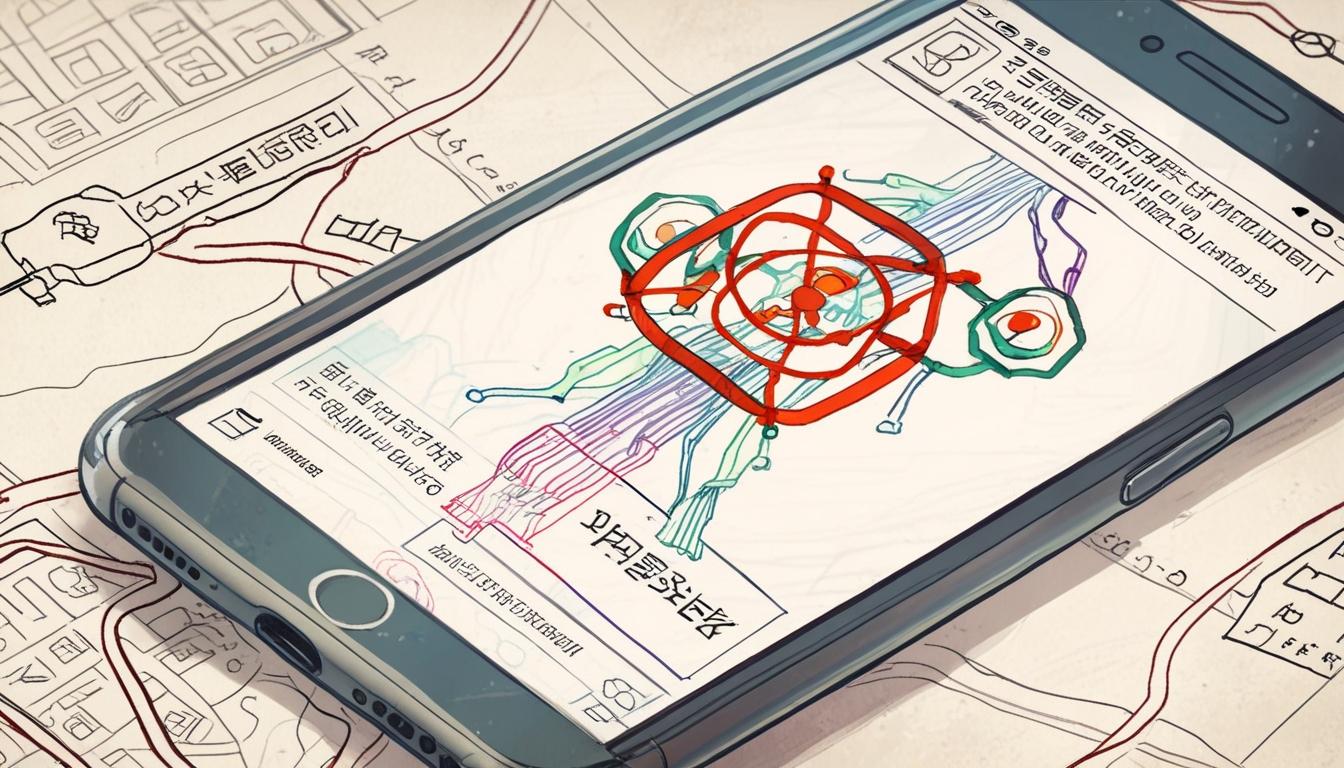
# South Korea investigates DeepSeek for unlawful data transfers to China and US



South Korea’s data protection authority has revealed that Chinese artificial intelligence startup DeepSeek transferred user data to multiple companies in China and the United States without obtaining user consent, breaching the country’s privacy laws.

The Personal Information Protection Commission (PIPC) announced the results of its preliminary investigation on 24 April into DeepSeek. This came after the AI service was temporarily suspended from South Korea’s app stores on 15 February due to non-compliance with data protection regulations.

According to the PIPC, DeepSeek did not secure permission from users before sharing their data abroad, nor did it inform users of such data transfers in its privacy policy. This is a violation of South Korean laws which mandate that companies must obtain explicit user consent before transferring personal information to any third party.

While the exact number of companies in the US and China that received the data remains unclear, the commission identified Beijing Volcano Engine Technology—a Chinese cloud service platform—as a recipient of information. This data included user-entered AI prompts along with device, network, and app information. The transfer of this data continued until the app’s suspension from South Korea’s app stores in mid-February.

The PIPC described Beijing Volcano Engine Technology as an “affiliate” of ByteDance, the parent company of TikTok, but clarified that it is a “separate legal entity” with no direct relation to ByteDance. The Epoch Times contacted both DeepSeek and ByteDance for comment, but no responses were received by the time of reporting.

DeepSeek informed the regulators that it utilised Beijing Volcano Engine Technology’s cloud service to address “security vulnerabilities” and to enhance user experience. However, it ultimately ceased transferring AI prompt data to the service, the PIPC reported.

In addition, DeepSeek denied collecting personal information from users under the age of 14. However, investigators found that the company lacked any procedure to verify the age of users during registration. Following the security review, DeepSeek has since implemented an age verification process.

The PIPC stated it would issue corrective recommendations requiring DeepSeek to establish a lawful basis for overseas data transfers. The company will also be directed to immediately delete any AI prompt data already transferred to Beijing Volcano Engine Technology and to improve transparency around its services.

Both DeepSeek and TikTok have come under increased scrutiny due to national security concerns related to their Chinese ownership. TikTok currently faces the possibility of a federal ban in the United States unless its parent company, ByteDance, divests from the platform. Meanwhile, DeepSeek has been banned on government devices by several countries and US government agencies.

Since its launch in January, DeepSeek, which is a free, open-source AI model operated by Hangzhou DeepSeek Artificial Intelligence and Beijing DeepSeek Artificial Intelligence, has sparked global data privacy concerns. Its privacy policy states that user information may be disclosed to third parties if necessary to comply with laws, legal processes, or government requests consistent with internationally recognised standards.

China's counterespionage law requires domestic companies to hand over user data when requested by authorities of the Chinese Communist Party, prompting additional global caution.

Apart from South Korea, Australia and Taiwan have banned the DeepSeek app on government devices due to data security concerns, and Italy’s Data Protection Authority has blocked access to the app citing data protection issues. In the United States, legislation was introduced in early February to ban the use and download of DeepSeek on government devices, with the state of Texas already prohibiting both DeepSeek and TikTok on such devices.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

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2. <https://www.scworld.com/brief/south-korea-unauthorized-user-data-transfer-conducted-by-deepseek> - It details how DeepSeek transferred user data without consent to Beijing Volcano Engine Technology, corroborating PIPC's findings on unauthorized data transfers to China and the U.S.
3. <https://www.rfa.org/english/china/2025/04/24/china-deep-seek-south-korea-user-data/> - This report supports the claim that DeepSeek transferred South Korean user data to multiple countries, including China and the U.S., which is against South Korean privacy laws.
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